Cousland Woods

(Plan period – 2026 to 2031)

Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.

3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.

5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.

6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.

8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.

9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. SITE DETIALS

Cousland Woods

Location:	Livingston Grid reference: NT023667 OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 65
Area:	8.57 hectares (21.18 acres)
External Designations:	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Internal Designations:	N/A

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Cousland Woods are part of the Woodland Trust's holding in Livingston, West Lothian and consist of eight compartments, made up of ten woodland blocks and 11 sub compartments, located in the centre and west of Livingston. The blocks lie either side of the Cousland road, with three compartments lying to north of the road, within residential areas on the edge of Eliburn. While those to the south of Cousland road are predominantly located within industrial development areas, which have become more residential due to increased housing developments in the area in recent years (especially compartment 30). The woods lie on a shallow south-facing slope between the altitudes of 121m and 137m above sea level.

The underlying geology of the area is sedimentary sandstones/ limestones/ shale of the Carbonioferous-Dinatian period. Soils are derived from a glacial till of carboniferous sedimentary sandstones and shale. They are generally brown forest soils with some gleying, of the Rowanhill association and are characterised by slowly permeable clayey horizons at varying depths between 40 and 80cm. The MLURI climate map identifies the area as fairly warm moist lowland and foothill, being moderately exposed with moderate winters.

The woodland areas making up 'Cousland Woods' cover an area of approximately 8.57ha and are mainly remnants of older policy shelterbelts that were retained as shelter and screening for more recent developments. Along with the older sections of woodland there are two more recently planted shelterbelts (compartments 30 and 33), which date from around the early 1970's. As well as areas of more recent planting along the western boundary of compartment 33, which was completed in 2024. Compartment 28 has been under woodland since at least 1860 and is classified as Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO 2b) in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Scots pine is a major component in compartments 28 and 26 and generally found in most other stands in mixture with other conifers including larch, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce and Norway Spruce with a range of broadleaves including beech, sycamore, oak, alder, wild cherry (gean), lime and birch. Younger areas of woodland contain small groups of a wide range of both conifers and broadleaves. The amount of under storey and regeneration is generally good in more mixed woodland areas, but poor where mature beech and sycamore specimens dominate.

There are no records of particularly rare plants present, and whilst the ground flora is limited, it does contain examples of the more common species found in damp grassland or mixed woodland habitats. Grasses are dominant less shaded areas, with areas of nettles, ferns and bramble growth. A range of mosses also occur on damper sites.

The conservation value of the woods is limited by their small size and high proportion of edge effect, combined with the presence of many planted non-native species and lack of under storey in some of the beech dominated stands. However, they are important for local biodiversity as they represent small reserves of more natural vegetation within the built environment. In some areas there has also been a relatively long continuity of woodland cover. The woodland blocks also provide links and nature corridors for wildlife between areas of conservation value, such as compartment 28 which provides a link between areas of LEPO (2b) woodland along Lochshot burn and Peel Park, both managed by West Lothian Council. Compartment 33 also forms part of a corridor the Almond Pools local biodiversity sites along the River Almond and areas of established woodland to the north.

Although larger mammals such as roe deer are rare due to development surrounding many of the woodland blocks, rabbits and grey squirrels do occur. Hares have also been seen on the edge of compartment 33. A range of birds, smaller mammals and invertebrates also benefit from the woodland cover, e.g. there is a rookery within compartment 28, as do a number of common woodland and woodland edge plants.

The woodland areas are an important part of the infrastructure of Livingston, providing separation, screening, and an attractive backdrop to the various residential and industrial developments.

The woodland blocks provide good opportunities for local users. Many of the blocks contain a number of informal paths and desire lines, there are also a number of tarmac paths that pass through or run along the edge of various woodland blocks. These tarmac paths link many of the accessible entrance points to the woodlands into the wider footpath and cycleway networks across Livingston, serving local residential area and also connecting into the wider complex of long-distance paths and Greenways. Most visitors are expected to be local walkers accessing the woodlands by foot. Due to the layout and linear nature, there are a number of return routes available utilising the tarmac paths adjacent to the woodlands.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

Cousland woods will be managed to safeguard their public amenity and biodiversity value and in line with the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives of improving and enhancing biodiversity, encouraging public access and enhancing people's enjoyment of woodlands.

The long term intention is to maintain these woodland areas under continuous cover where possible, releasing natural regeneration as and when it occurs, and to enhance those areas which are currently predominantly coniferous through gradual conversion to predominantly native broadleaf uneven-aged woodland. Wherever possible, native and to a lesser degree non-native natural regeneration will be utilised and released. Planting gaps with native species will be considered if there is insufficient regeneration. Individual examples and groups of specimen conifers, particularly Scots pine which is featured throughout West Lothian, will be retained, however regeneration of these species will be monitored to maintain a mixed, predominantly broadleaved character woodland.

An increase in native tree species should help improve light into the canopy and in time support a variety of ground flora communities. In addition, standing and fallen deadwood will be retained where it is safe to do so.

Livingston was developed with an extensive network of street-lit, tarmac cycle ways and footpaths, linking north to south and east to west. Many of the Trust's woods border these routes and this often negates the need to improve internal woodland paths beyond their beaten earth standard.

Due to the woods' location within the central belt and close proximity to large populations, the intention is to use the woods to improve and raise awareness of the biodiversity, recreation and health benefits woodlands provide.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Connecting People with Woods and Trees

Description

Cousland woods are a well-used complex of woodlands in the centre and west of Livingston. The 8 compartments border several residential and industrial areas and there are bus stops and parking within walking distance. Cousland woods is a convenient local resource for outdoor recreation for the population of Eliburn and Livingston Village (approx. 5317 people according to National Records of Scotland) within the wider Livingston population of approximately 57,000 (according to 2024 Locality Plan).

Considering the recent increase in local population with a number of recent and proposed housing developments (as of 2025) in the area surrounding Cousland Woods, these blocks of woodland are significant assets for Livingston, providing a valuable outdoor resource in an increasingly urbanised areas. As of 2025, the area around Cousland Woods has a tree equity score ranging from 83 to 100 (out of 100). This shows some areas currently have good access to trees and woodlands within the community for health, climatic and economic benefits, however there is still room for improvement in areas on the east and western ends of Livingston Village. There are also further developments planned (as of 2025) in the area including significant housing development near compartments 26 and 33 which could affect the score, therefore tree equity scores should be monitored going forward.

The level of public use of Cousland Woods is defined as WT Access Category A (high usage) and most users live locally and travel through the site to access amenities such as workplaces, schools and shopping as well as enjoying the wooded habitat for informal outdoor recreation, primarily dog walking. The tarmac path that runs alongside compartment 29 is part of the West Lothian Shale Trail, which is a 16 mile long trail between West Calder and Winchburgh exploring the areas industrial past, a main stay of which is the Five Sisters bing which can be seen from compartment 33a. The Shale Trail is popular with dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders and may also draw in people who live outside the immediate surrounding areas. All the woodland compartments are generally accessible directly from the surrounding roads and pavement network.

Cousland woods is close to public transport routes with the nearest bus stop located on Kirkton North Road, approx. 10m away from compartment 29a. All other compartments, apart from 26a, also have bus stops located within 500m of access points. Cousland woods is also found between the two main train stations in Livingston, with Livingston North approx. 1.6km and Livingston South approx. 3.7km away from the wood. There is no onsite parking, although parking is available on adjacent residential streets and industrial estates. Other Woodland Trust owned sites within 1km include Kirkton Woods, Eliburn Woods and Ladywell Woods.

There 19 entrances to the woodland located across the site, identified by a welcome post installed in early 2020. All of the entrances are barrier free. Internally there are approximately 410m of paths with many other paths that run parallel to the woodland blocks and are managed by West Lothian Council. These are a mix of unsurfaced (approx. 164.3m) and tarmac paths (approx. 246.1m) with some streetlighting and a straight through routes across the compartments which link into the pavement network within Livingston, giving access to long distance core path routes. Part of the path that runs parallel to compartments 26a, 27a, 28a and 31a form part of the National Cycle Path 75 which links Edinburgh and Glasgow. The paths through and around compartment 28 form part of the Follyburn Path (WL33) which is a core path that links the Railway Path (WL29) and the National Cycle Path 75, which also passes through Peel Park and along the

Lochshot Burn which leads to Eliburn Park. The Shale Trail also runs past compartment 29a which highlights the area's industrial past between Winchburgh and West Calder.

Built structures are limited across the site and consist of post and wire fencing around the eastern boundary of compartment 28 (approx. 340m), the western edge of 27b (approx. 150m) and across the previous access point into compartment 27a (approx. 15m). These are in place as preventative measures due to high levels of fly tipping and garden waste dumping in the area. The woodland compartments can still be accessed with entrances and a street lit path in 28a,and through informal entrances and desire lines in 27a and 27b, although this is not encouraged.

Cousland Woods has compartments located to the south of Eliburn and in Livingston Village. Some of these are in more industrial areas such as compartment 26 and 33, but others are in residential areas. This close proximity to residential areas also offers potential opportunities to work with local education centres. Livingston Village Primary and Early Learning Centre along with First Class Nursery are located less than 300m from compartment 29a, 500m from compartments 27a and 28a and 700m from compartment 30. Busy Bees Nursey is also located approx. 200m from compartment 31a. However, there are currently no schools or nurseries known to be using the area for educational activities. Livingston Village Community Education Centre is also located within Livingston Village Primary and hosts a number of community groups, including the local guide group. The Almond Valley Heritage Centre can also be found in the area and is a short walk from compartment 29 (approx. 150m). The heritage centre, on the site of the old Livingston Mill and farm, aims to 'preserve and interpret the history and environment of West Lothian' through its active farm steading and shale oil museum, highlighting both the industrial and agricultural past of the surrounding area.

Fly tipping, garden waste dumping and fire raising are known issues in Cousland Woods. As of 2022, Woodland Trust has been meeting regularly with West Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (WLPARC) to discuss incidents and issues affecting woodland use and management with other local services and landowners. This has enabled open discussion to recognise trends and ability to streamline messaging and pool resources for the area.

There are a number of Volunteer Woodland Wardens that cover Livingston who regularly patrol the area and provide reports of issues found on site. However, there is currently no Volunteer Woodland Warden dedicated to Cousland Woods. A Woodland Working Group (WWG) was set up for the Woodland Trust sites across West Lothian during late 2019. The aim of this group is to conduct practical conservation task across the 16 Woodland Trust sites in the area, including Cousland Woods.

Locally, a group known as 'West Lothian Litter Pickers' has been created by enthusiastic volunteers. Although this is an independently managed group, the members do cover many of the Woodland Trust sites in Livingston, including Kirkton Woods, and wider West Lothian. Their work helps to keep the sites clean as well as encouraging community engagement for the sites and reporting any issues of concern.

Significance

The woods provide enjoyable woodland walks within an urban setting and are used by the local community for walking and running. The site provides a chance to promote access to a safe, natural environment close to where people live.

Cousland Woods is accessible to a large demographic of people and easily reached with or without transport, forming an essential part of the local access network, providing varied and alternative routes as well as linking into longer distance route. The woodland belts are an extremely important part of the infrastructure of Livingston, providing separation and an attractive backdrop to the various residential and industrial developments surrounding the woods. The belts also function as windbreaks and provide some barrier to noise.

The woodland is a significant access for Livingston providing a valuable outdoor resource, providing opportunities to observe local wildlife, for the thriving local population in a highly urbanised area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

To further promote and use the woodland as an educational resource to engage the local community and businesses in the surrounding area.

The increasing levels of residential and industrial developments may provide a larger audience for events or connections with local community groups in the area.

As there are currently minimal species records for Cousland Woods therefore anything recorded would be a significant record for the site. This would be a good opportunity to involve the local community and businesses to raise awareness and understanding of biodiversity in our woodlands. This could link into existing local events with partner organisations.

To further develop access facilities within the site, such as benches, responding to user demand. Areas of the path suffer from poor drainage. Nearby developments will bring many more people into the area, providing an opportunity to upgrade the path to provide consistent surface to improve access for users, including push chair and wheelchair users.

Location within an urban setting may enable access to funding such as landfill funds, windfarm funds or Active travel funds. Also, close proximity to other Woodland Trust sites within Livingston allows for potential to group works (such as path upgrades) together to be more efficient and cost effective.

Constraints:
Fragmentation and small size of compartments across the site limits the suitability for engagement events.

Some areas of the paths which are unsurfaced can remain muddy throughout the year which can make the area inaccessible especially for those with mobility issues. Poorly drained soils make access provisions difficult to maintain on soft surface routes.

Lack of infrastructure on site also complicates maintenance work such as path upgrades or tree felling as there is minimal appropriate places for machinery and material storage. This increases the cost and duration of these operations.

Previous incidents of fires, fly tipping and vandalism discourages investment in installation of structures such as sculptures or signage.

Fragmented linear compartments restrict the ability to establish large circular routes which can limit suitability for some events on site. There is no formal car parking, which can cause problems with neighbours and visitors parking on the local roads.

Factors Causing Change

Continuous litter, fly tipping (including garden waste and materials) and fire raising detract from the natural beauty of this site and are hazardous to the public and wildlife. Vandalism to signs also puts pressure on site infrastructure.

Path edges growing in reduce visibility and path width, potentially resulting in personal safety concerns by users.

Increase of public use due to increased development such as areas of recent residential development to the east of compartment 30 and the proposed industrial development to the west of compartment 33.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

There will be a well-maintained network of paths and rides with a variety of aspects allowing safe access across the site. The site should be accessible safe and welcoming with management of infrastructure and signage.

Due to the location of the woods within the central belt and close proximity to large populations, the intention is to use the woods to improve and raise awareness and understanding within the local community regarding biodiversity, recreation and health benefits woodlands provide.

The site should be well used, appreciated and respected by the local community and it should be known for its wildlife interest and varied habitats.

Litter and fly tipping will be removed as far as resources allow, to maintain the natural appearance of the wood and discourage further abuse of the woodland.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

During this plan period, the short term objective is to continue to provide public access at Cousland woods which is safe and welcoming. Access provision for this site will be keeping with WT access category A (high usage). This will be achieved by:

1) The site will be kept in a safe and welcoming condition through site maintenance
   a) Path cuts and entrance maintenance (twice annually)
   b) Vegetation cutback from path to allow lines of sight where possible and appropriate (as required)
   c) Litter and fly tip uplift (as required)
   d) Regular site safety inspections (tree safety, gates and fencing) (as per site risk assessment)
   e) Estate furniture to be repaired (as required)
   f) Streetlight pruning in compartments 26 (approx. 415m), 29 (approx. 213m) and 32 (approx. 85m) (2026, 2028, 2030)

2) Providing and developing more opportunities for community engagement:
   a) Continue to meet with West Lothian Partnership Against Rural Crime (WLPARC) group to discuss updates and antisocial issues on site and collaborate with other local organisations where possible (ongoing)
   b) Liaise with the local community council, education centres, organised groups and neighbouring businesses (as required)
   c) Recruit a Volunteer Woodland Warden to cover Cousland Woods (before end of plan period)
   d) Conduct WWG sessions on site (as required)

3) Engaging with planners and neighbouring developers to ensure the impacts to sites are minimised and achieve gains where possible for public access and biodiversity as seen in the National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 (as required).

4.2 f2 Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin

Description

Covering over 8.5ha across 8 compartments, Cousland Woods includes 10 distinct woodland blocks, with 11 sub compartments. These are located in and around housing, roads and industrial developments around the centre of Livingston around the Eliburn and Livingston Village areas to the north and south of Cousland Road. These woodland blocks are an increasingly significant natural feature within the local landscape, considering the increase in development in the local area. Cousland Woods connect areas of local biodiversity between the River Almond and the Lochshot burn, helping to form important nature networks in an urban landscape as well as creating an attractive backdrop and screening for various industrial and residential developments in the area.

The woodlands LEPO(2b) status is confirmed by its existence on the 1860 OS map. This is confined to sections of sub-compartments 27a, 27b and 28, however sections of compartments 26, 29, 31 and 32 also appear to contain older trees which can be seen on the 1860 OS map. These may have been omitted from the ancient woodland inventory due to their small size. The LEPO(2b) woodland is dominated by Scots pine, beech, oak, sycamore and ash. There are currently no specific veteran trees that have been recorded on site via the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI). However, there appears to be a veteran lime present to the north of compartment 33 and there may be more in the future due to the age and on-going senescence of the mature beech across Cousland Woods. The younger compartment 33 is located to the north of the Almond Pools Local Biodiversity Site boundary helping to provide a habitat corridor to the areas of LEPO(2b) woodland to the north.

Many of the compartments in Cousland Woods function as screening and shelter belts around the housing and industrial developments in the area. Some of these would have originally been field margins or areas around Livingston House, which were then added to with planting by the Livingston Development Corporation (LDC) in the 1950s-1970s to provide screening. Compartments 30 and 33 are much younger that the rest of Cousland Woods, which is reflected by the mapping available. These were most likely planted by the LDC during the initial development of Livingston and are by design small, isolated compartments. There have been some works to restructure some of the woodland blocks. Thinning works were carried out in 2002, 2012 and 2014 in compartments 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32 and 33. Whilst works will have opened the canopy of these compartments at the time, these have now become closed in recent years as the remaining trees have matured leading to dark compartments with limited understory and ground flora. Most of the timber removed during the thinning works was felled to waste, creating large amounts of fallen dead wood in the small compartments. This along with limited access points and paths through sections (especially compartments 26, 27a, 30 and 33) have made it extremely hard to carry out inspections and any subsequent works throughout the wood.

There have also been areas of more recent planting with 1.36ha along the western boundary of compartment 33 carried out in 2023/24 when over 1000 trees were planted by volunteers. The planting contained a mix of native species such as silver birch, hazel, holly, hawthorn, oak, goat willow, rowan, elder, alder and Scots pine. Due to significant browsing pressures from roe deer, hare and rabbits the area was included in a wider trial of non-plastic biodegradable tree shelters across the Woodland Trust estate. A post and wire fence was also added along the western boundary to reduce the risk of browsing. The area, which was recently managed as agricultural land, has been transformed with a mix of open ground flora species moving in along with natural regeneration from the established woodland block.

The majority of the site has consistent flat or gently sloping terrain, except compartment 29 which is formed on top of a grassy knoll which rises above the surrounding residential area with steep sides in all directions.

Species composition across the site comprises a variety of native and non-native species. Native species present include Scots pine, oak, ash, elm, elder, field maple, hazel, holly, willow, wild cherry, alder, birch, rowan and hawthorn. Non-native species found on site includes beech, sycamore, horse chestnut, lime, Norway maple, ornamental cherry, Turkey oak as well as non-native conifer stands of larch, Sitka spruce and firs. Although the species list for Cousland Woods is extensive, the majority of the compartments are dominated by beech and sycamore with some dense stands of Scots pine and non-native conifer in close proximity to roads and residential areas.

Ash Die Back (ADB) has been identified on site. This is a particular issue for Cousland Woods as ash tree mapping in 2020 identified areas with high density of ash near development across the site due to the small size of the compartments and surrounding land use. Since mapping was completed, there have been works carried out annually to remove significantly declining ash across Cousland Woods to help limit the risk to the public and infrastructure, however levels of ash regeneration are very high where light allows.

Deadwood is present in various sizes and forms (in canopy, fallen and standing) across Cousland Woods. This includes substantial fallen deadwood from previous fell to waste thinning works in 2002, 2012 and 2014. There has also been an increase of windblow across the compartments leading to a further increase of fallen deadwood, especially in compartments 27,28 and 31. Due to the location and the associated safety concerns regarding paths, roads and residential areas surrounding the compartments the level of standing deadwood is lower than required to provide good habitat to support invertebrates, fungi and other wildlife. There has also been a history of deadwood being removed for firewood, highlighting how, despite an effort to retain deadwood where possible it can be challenging to maintain in an urban setting. There are some good examples of large diameter standing deadwood in areas where there are high proportions of mature beech. These include in compartments 28, 29, 31 which contain mature beech which have been reduced, due to safety concerns, or have become veteranized during recent storms. Levels of deadwood associated with the mature beech is likely to increase in the future as they start to show signs of senescence. As these provide good habitat for a variety of species, efforts have been made to retain these trees where possible.

The ground flora varies across the different compartments and is very localised due to the ground or canopy conditions. Course vegetation such as bramble and raspberry as well as nettle and fern are the dominant species across the compartments but is often confined to localised areas and accompanied by areas of open ground under non-native conifer or dense areas of beech or sycamore where the canopy has become closed, limiting light down to the ground layer. Due to recent storms or aging mature beech and the resulting windblow throughout the site areas of the canopy have been opened allowing species such as avens and rosebay willowherb to move into areas where conditions allow.

More varied flora communities are present in compartments 26 and 33. The wetland area in compartment 26a is lower lying than the surrounding woodland so has much wetter soils which support water loving species such as willow, alder and wetland specialists such as yellow flag iris, reeds and Juncus species. This may also be fed by a waste ground water pipe, which allows the area to retain water year-round, providing an important habitat for the wildlife in the surrounding area. The open ground area in compartment 33 is found along the western edge of the established woodland. This was fenced and then planted during the 2023/2024 planting season by corporate and Woodland Trust volunteers. In the years after this planting the areas has become covered by open ground species such as grasses, sedges, thistles, willowherb, knapweed and ragwort. This variation in the habitats and species diversity is welcome in such as small site, but this is set to change over the years as the recent planting becomes more mature and shades out the open grown species.

Open ground within the woodland compartments is limited due to the nature of the woodland arranged in shelterbelts creating a dense closed canopy structure. There are some areas of open ground in compartments 26, 28 and 33. Apart from the wet area in compartment 26a, most of this is classed as temporary open ground due to recent planting or natural regeneration moving in after tree safety works. Overall open ground equates to 10% (1ha) of the whole site. Although this is small, this need to be considered within a landscape context where areas of species rich open ground is becoming more limited due to increase development in the area. This includes areas between compartments 26 and 33 and to west of compartment 33, which are currently unimproved grassland and agricultural land respectively. Both these areas are currently (2025) going through the planning permission process for housing and industrial developments, covering approx. 27ha and will significantly change the surrounding area for both people and wildlife.

Whilst there are no watercourses that run though the site, the Lochshot burn runs along the boundary of compartments 26a and 27a for which they make up part of the riparian woodland corridor along the burn. The southern boundary of compartment 33 is also less than 100m from the Almond East Pool along the River Almond, which is a Local Biodiversity Site.

Levels of invasive non-native species (INNS) are relatively low across Cousland Woods, compared to other areas in Livingston. Key INNS such as Rhododendron ponticum, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed not currently present on site. Known invasive species are currently limited to non-native conifers, snowberry, cotoneaster, Rosa rugosa, and hedge privet (as of 2025). Garden escapees are also an issue across the site which borders many residential areas due to regular garden waste dumping. This has resulted in plants such as Sorbaria spreading across compartment 29 from the roadside along with common periwinkle and variegated yellow arch angel along the eastern boundary of compartment 30.

Species records for birds, mammals and invertebrates are currently minimal for Cousland Woods. However, large mammals such as roe deer, rabbits, hares and foxes have been seen on site.

Significance

The amount of ancient woodland left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. Compartments 27a, 27b and 28 are shown on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as LEPO(2b) and was present on the OS maps of 1860, which indicates a relatively high biodiversity potential. Many of the other compartments that make up Cousland Woods also have mature trees of significant age, highlighting there may be of a similar age to the LEPO designated areas and suggests a high value of habitat and biodiversity in the area.

The woodland compartments are a significant feature of the local landscape and provide screening and shelter between housing developments and industrial estates. The sites also form part of the wider mosaic landscape providing vital nature corridors including between areas of riparian habitat.

The woodland is also increasingly important for the local biodiversity as a refuge from the built-up urban areas and surrounding development and infrastructure.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities
Proximity to other Woodland Trust sites nearby allows for potential to group works (such as felling) together to be more efficient and cost effective.

Ongoing senescence of mature beech, presence of ash die back and continuing windblow will lead to an opportunity to retain deadwood, in areas where is it suitable to do so, to increase habitat diversity across the site and opportunities to diversify the canopy and age structure.

Supplementary planting of native tree and shrub layer species in areas where the canopy allows could contribute to increasing the biodiversity and resilience on site.

Opening up the canopy via natural processes (ie senescence, ADB or windblow), non-native conifer removal or through planned tree safety works and thinning may allow improvements to the biodiversity of the ground flora.

A focus on increasing volunteering and biological recording in the area will allow for opportunities to record high value mature trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) highlighting the woodlands importance to the surrounding ecosystem.

Constraints
Proximity to residential housing and road links restricts the ability to leave standing deadwood close to boundaries, as well as paths, and limits suitable species for replanting in these areas-larger species such as oak should not be planted close to the boundary in order to avoid future conflict as species develop. Furthermore, historically, deadwood has been stolen for firewood.

Close proximity to development and road links restrict appropriate methods for felling/ harvesting works resulting in complex operations which are time consuming to plan and expensive to execute.

A lack of appropriate access points for machinery and removal of timber result in very complex tree safety operations which must include access agreements with third party land owners. These are extremely time consuming to plan, expensive to execute and rely on a good working relationship with surrounding landowners.

The closed canopy nature of the woodland and pockets of dense planting and non-native species such as beech, sycamore, Sitka spruce and snowberry restrict light levels causing a reduction in ground flora and suppressed natural regeneration. Regeneration across the site is mainly ash, beech and sycamore. This is concerning as the ash regen may not be tolerant of ADB and the beech and sycamore is likely to outcompete natural species and may not be appropriate for the surroundings.

Due to the urban location of Cousland Wood within close proximity to multiple small woodland areas in Livingston, invasive species and diseases present elsewhere in Livingston are likely to be aided by people, spreading seeds or spores in soil on their footwear. Non-native invasive species such as common periwinkle, snowberry and Sorbaria spreading into the woodland have a negative impact on native species by reducing the available habitat and resources and are at risk of spreading via machinery during tree works.

Squirrel damage and browsing by deer, rabbits and hares are threats to young regeneration and planting on site. With the surrounding built up landscape, the woodland may attract more individuals as there are limited options for animals. In areas surrounding residential or industrial developments disturbance by humans will reduce the numbers of individual deer but may also encourage more squirrels due to feeding via bird feeders etc. The small size of the woodland compartments and the proximity to people also significantly limits the possibility for management of herbivores within the woodland for the foreseeable future.

Factors Causing Change

Much of the planting by the Livingston Development Corporation (LDC) was carried out in the 1960s, which included planting in most of the compartments of Cousland Woods. These woodland blocks have become dense with closed canopies as the trees have matured. This significantly reduces the amount of light that can reach the lower levels of the canopy and in turn limiting ground flora species and natural regeneration. This results in areas with large proportions of bare ground and little regeneration impacting the overall resilience of the wood. Where areas of open ground are surrounded by established woodland, such as in compartment 26a, there is a risk of losing these areas which may be important in the wider landscape due to the different species assemblage found.

Windblow has become more significant across West Lothian, including Cousland Woods. Most of the conifers including larch, Sitka spruce and fir species were planted by the LDC during the 1960s prior to the Woodland Trust's acquisition in 1996. These trees are now reaching their terminal height which makes them more vulnerable to windblow. This along with areas becoming wetter due to changes in climate and weather patterns along with increasing development in the surrounding areas poses a potential threat to infrastructure and public safety across the site. This is of particular concern in compartments in close proximity to residential areas such as 27, 28, 29 and 30.

The large mature beech trees which are a feature in the West Lothian landscape tend to be of a similar age and are now subject to ongoing senescence. They are becoming increasingly vulnerable to storm damage and disease which is becoming a challenge to manage in terms of trees safety and maintenance. This decline will continue and will have particular impact on compartments with high densities of mature beech such as compartments 26, 27, 28, 29, 31 and 32.

Ash die back (ABD) is present on site and throughout West Lothian. Due to the high proportion of ash throughout Cousland Woods this disease will have significant impact on the composition of these areas. This also presents a safety concern due to the location of the woodland blocks next to residential developments and roads. The volume of standing dead wood in areas where it is suitable to retail individuals will also increase (i.e. away from roads, footpaths and urban boundaries). Due to the prevalence of ADB, ash will also not be included within restocking. Therefore, it's density on the site overall is likely to decline in the long term.

A Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) for Phytophthora ramorum was issued for an area to the north of Livingston in 2018. Whilst the buffer zone did not reach Cousland Woods it is likely the disease will continue to spread. This is of particular concern in 28, 30, 32 and 33 where larch is present.

Whilst there will be no deliberate attempts to establish more open ground on the site, areas of the canopy will naturally open-up gradually in response to ageing and disease. These areas may result in coarse vegetation such as bracken and brambles becoming dominant. Although the dominance of brambles restricts floral diversity to some degree, the presence of this coarse vegetation can also help to protect new trees from browsing.

The levels of new developments around Cousland Woods have increased greatly in recent years with industry or housing developments found next to almost every compartment of the woods. This includes proposed industrial development (approx. 24.65ha) to the west of compartment 33 (proposed 2025) and housing development (approx. 2.5ha) to the east of 33 and south of compartment 26 (proposed 2025). Many of these compartments were once isolated pockets and shelter belts in the past, dating back to the 1800s in areas with LEPO(2b) designations. These are now surrounded by infrastructure which brings more pressures such as increased public access through site, which will require more tree safety management in these areas. This will have a knock-on effect on mature trees on the boundary or along paths and the levels of deadwood present on site through large diameter standing deadwood and deadwood

present in the canopy.

Encroachment and damage to trees, particularly those on the boundary, from neighbouring development is experienced across Cousland Woods, especially in compartment surrounded by residential areas such as 27, 28 and 30.

Areas surrounded by residential developments also experience high levels of fly tipping from gardens or access points. Compartments 27,28, 29 and 30 are areas of known fly tipping hot spots. Preventative measures have been taken in compartments 27 and 28 in the past with post and wire fencing now installed along the boundaries with the surrounding residential roads. With increased fly tipping there is also an increased risk of organic material being dumped into the woodland, either directly from gardens or being brought in by vehicle from other areas of Livingston. This may lead to more garden escapees and invasive non-native species being introduced onto site. Non-native invasive species such as common periwinkle, snowberry, cotoneaster and Sorbaria spreading into the woodland are having a negative impact on native species by reducing the available habitat and resources and are at risk of spreading via machinery during tree works.

Browsing by deer, rabbits and hares as well as squirrel damage are all present across compartments and may contribute to potentially supressing natural regeneration, planting and continue healthy growth of established trees especially in compartment 33 which borders a vast area of open ground.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To restore the woodland to predominantly native species of mixed age, although species composition will be varied, with a proportion of conifers and non-native broadleaves will be accepted.

Openings in the canopy due to felling, tree safety works, storm damage and senescence will allow for the regeneration or planting of native tree and shrub species to diversify the age structure of the woodland and encourage healthy ground flora communities.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The focus of the STOs for Cousland Woods will be to improve the biodiversity and resilience and to maintain the varied composition and structural diversity of the woodland. This will be achieved by:

1) Improving awareness and recording of species presence on site and the surrounding area:
    a) Commission ecological surveys across the site to identify sensitive areas and/or species requiring additional mitigation for site works (prior to significant felling works commencing)
    b) Map any ancient, veteran or notable trees present on the ATI and identify any suitable mitigations or interventions required to take into the next management plan period, ensuring these trees are protected for the future (prior to significant felling works commencing)
    c) Discuss areas of non-native species, deer and squirrel management with neighbouring landowners including West Lothian Council and explore possibilities for a collaborative approach concerning monitoring of these species and their impact locally (ongoing)
    d) Raising awareness regarding invasive garden species and the risk of garden/organic waste dumping through engagement with surrounding residents and landowners (as required)

2) Restructuring areas for pro-active health and safety and enhanced biodiversity on site:
    a) Gradual ash removal across in high-risk zones, including boundaries and paths in response to ADB (as required)
    b) Restructuring of areas of dense woodland:

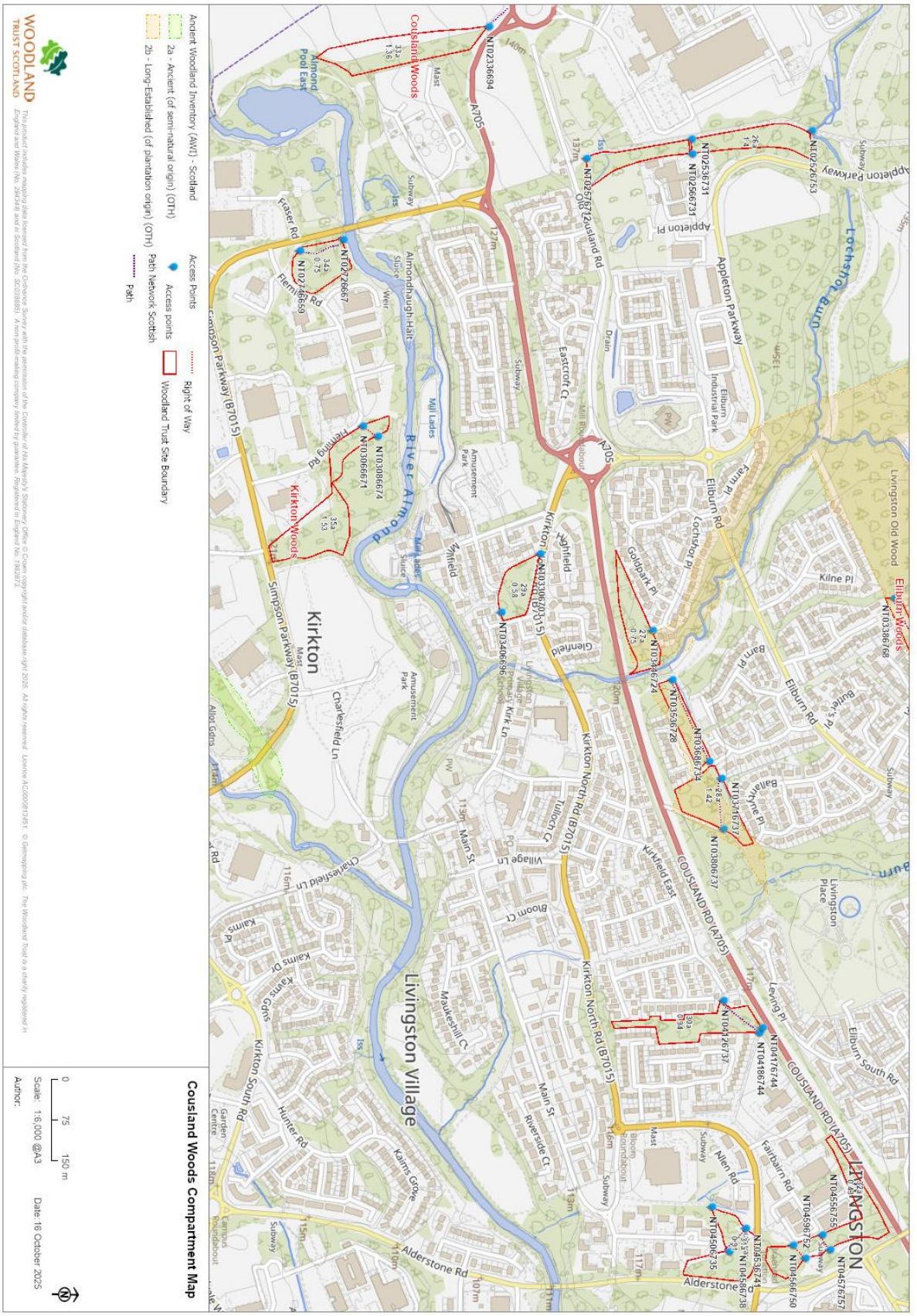
i) Via thinning works:
   (1) Compartment 26: 25% thin throughout compartment focusing on non-native conifer and halo thinning around veteran/future veteran trees (end of plan period)
   (2) Compartment 27b: 25% thin throughout compartment (end of plan period)
   (3) Compartment 28: 25% thin of whole compartment focusing on non-native conifer (end of plan period)
   (4) Compartment 31: 25% thin of whole compartment focusing on non-native conifer and grey alder (end of plan period)
   (5) Compartment 32: 25% thin of whole compartment focusing on non-native conifer and halo thinning around veteran and future veteran trees (end of plan period)
   (6) Compartment 33: 25% thin of established woodland focusing on non-native conifer (end of plan period)

ii) Via Clear Fell:
   (1) Compartment 27a: Clear fell dense stands of poor form conifer (Sitka Spruce) of approx. 0.1ha on the northern boundary next to housing. 25% thin of whole compartment focusing on non-native conifer and trees with poor form (end of plan period)
   (2) Compartment 30: Clear fell of compartment due to safety zones next to housing, roads and electrical distribution station (approx. 0.94ha)

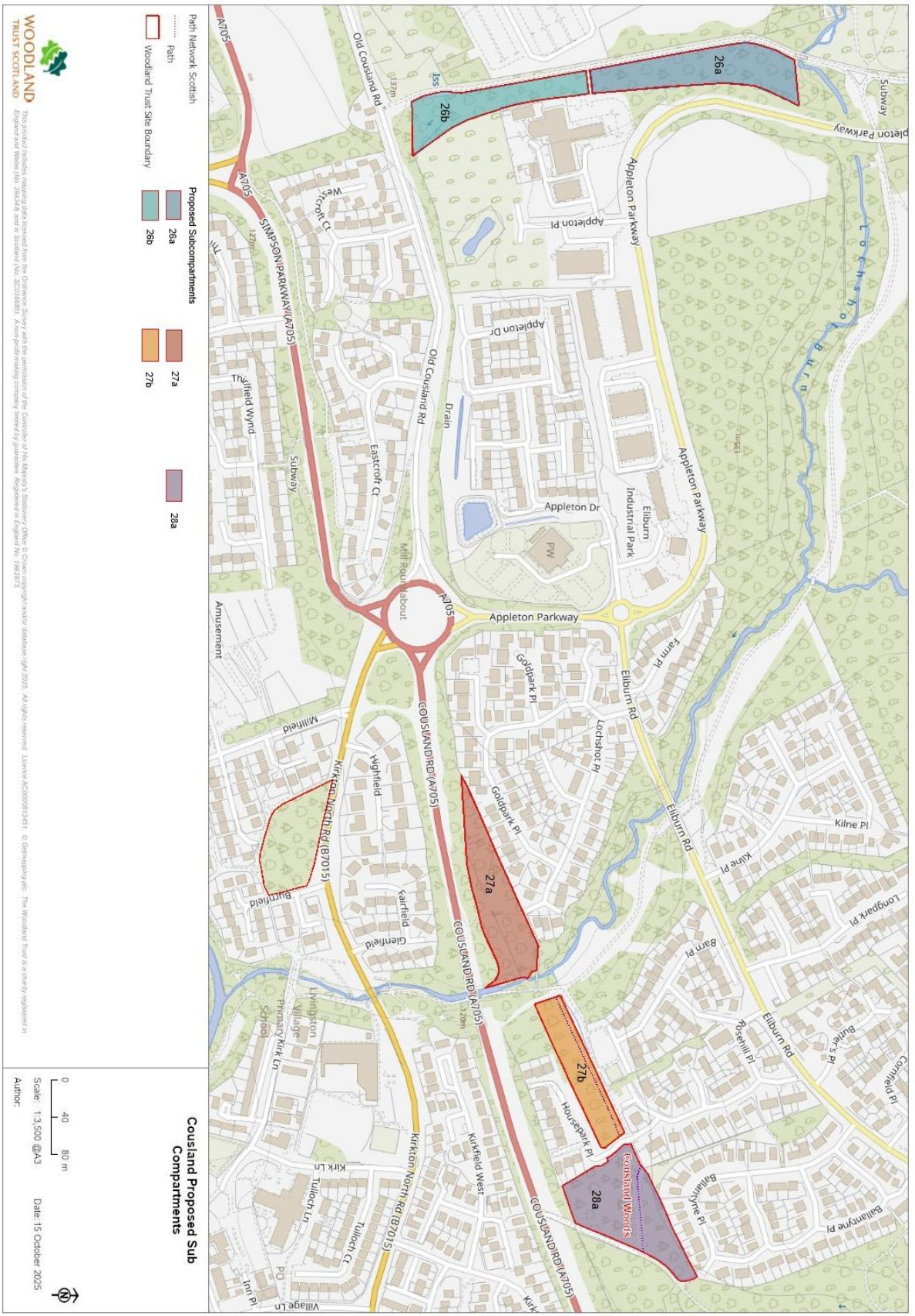
3) Optimise potential areas for restructuring by adding species diversity and age complexity:
   a) Restock areas of clear fell with native broadleaves as per approved felling licence conditions. Planting in boundary areas (near housing/industry, path and roads) will be dominated with small tree and shrub species (including hazel, hawthorn, elder, holly, bird cherry, birch and rowan) (following the completion of felling works)
      i) Compartment 27a: approx. 160 trees
      ii) Compartment 30: approx. 1500 trees
   b) Enrichment planting with native tree and shrub species in areas where canopy and ground flora allows in compartment 27b, so species and age complexity can develop (Approx. 100 trees by end of the plan period).
   c) Monitor felled areas for natural regeneration and vitality of restocking (annually between felling completion and the end of the plan period)
   d) Weeding and replacing any dead planted trees to ensure establishment and fulfilment of felling licence conditions (for 3 years following restocking, or until established)
   e) Monitor area of recent planted trees in compartment 33 for signs of herbivore damage and vitality of planting replacing any dead trees, if necessary, approx. 0.59ha (annually, or until established)

4) Protecting the site's biodiversity by:
   a) Retain the current areas of open ground in 26a for habitat diversity (as required)
   b) Removal of non-native shrub species:
      i) Snowberry in compartments 28, Sorbaria in compartment 29, and 31 through nonchemical methods such as hand pulling or digging (end of plan period)
      ii) Common periwinkle and variegated yellow arch angel in compartment 30 using herbicide (prior to felling works commencing and annual spot treatments after felling works completed)
      iii) Monitor and review results of removal work annually to ensure control has been successful and if it should be continued in the next planning period (annually after removal)
   c) Standing dead trees to be left where it is safe and appropriate to do so (as appropriate)

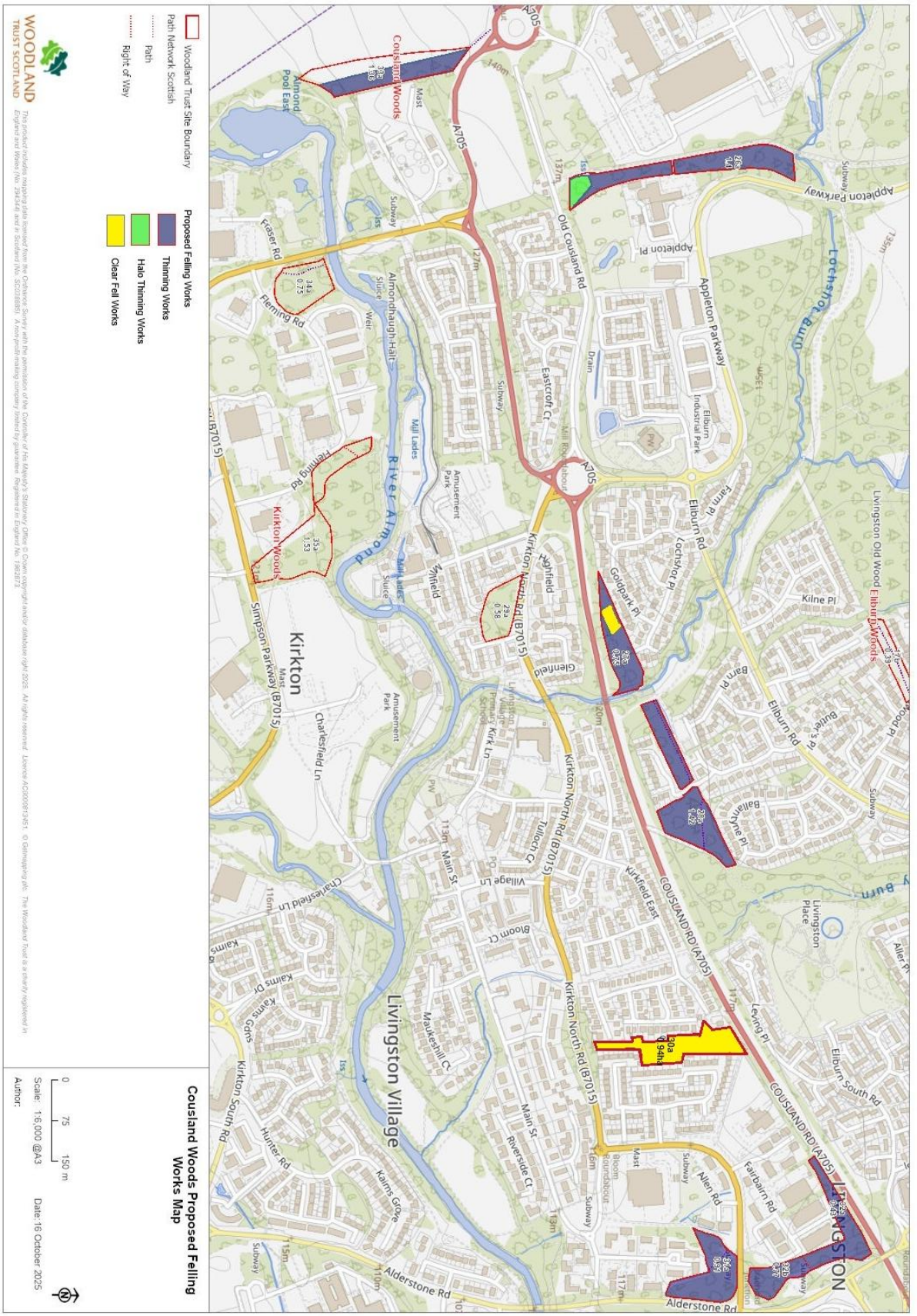
APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT MAP



APPENDIX 2: CHANGES TO SUBCOMPARTMENT NAMES



APPENDIX 3: PROPOSED TREE FELLING WORKS



APPENDIX 4: HARVESTING TABLE (20 YEARS)

Compartment	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Forecast Year	Estimated Total Volume (m3)
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2026	1
26	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	1.4	2027	50
27a	Clear Fell (Removing non-native conifer along northern boundary next to housing)	0.1	2027	75
27a	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	0.64	2027	25
27b	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	0.49	2027	30
28a	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	0.93	2027	50
30	Clear fell (Compartment restructure due to safety zones next to housing)	0.94	2027	200
31	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	0.91	2027	50
32	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	1.2	2027	50
33	Thinning (Compartment restructure)	0.76	2027	50
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2028	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2030	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2032	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2034	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2036	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2038	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2040	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2042	1
26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2044	1

26a, 29a, 32a	Thinning (Streetlight Pruning): 26a – 415m, 29a – 213m, 32a – 85m	0.7	2046	1

APPENDIX 5: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
26a	0.8	Sycamore	1960	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	
Previously referred to as 'Eliburn Campus Wood', this sub compartment is to the north of the site and is a mature mixed shelter belt with Scots pine and larch dominating the canopy with occasional Norway maple, Sitka spruce, ash, sycamore and beech. The canopy has become closed in recent years (2025) so there is a variable shrub layer and understorey throughout and includes hawthorn, blackthorn, sycamore, oak, ash, hazel, rowan, cherry crab apple beech and elm. The ground flora is limited under the closed canopy but where light allows it is dominated by soft grasses and brambles with occasional broad buckler fern but is very localised. There is a small wetland area to the south of the sub compartment with willow and alder present along with specialised flora species such as yellow flag iris. Deadwood from thinning in 2006, tree safety work and windblow is scattered throughout. The wood is an important wildlife corridor, with the Dedridge burn to the north of the sub compartment, linking with the greenway network to the north. The western boundary is with the street lit Barracks cycle path. To the east the wood is bounded by industrial land and to the northeast, Appleton Parkway. There is a retained access through the middle of the sub compartments linking the 2 industrial sites east and west. (Previously northern block of 26a, renamed in 2025)						
26b	0.6	Oak	1960	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Services & wayleaves	
Previously referred to as 'Eliburn Campus Wood' Mature mixed shelter belt with mixed broadleaves dominating including Scots Pine, sycamore, mature oak and beech found at the south of the compartment. There is variable shrub layer and understorey throughout and includes some sycamore, ash, birch, beech, poplar, oak alder, with elm, rowan and hawthorn on the edge. This section of the compartment is more open compared to 26a with areas of soft grasses, bramble and open ground under mature beech, oak and poplar. Deadwood from thinning in 2006 and tree safety work is scattered throughout. The wood is an important wildlife corridor linking with the greenway network to the north. The western boundary is with the street lit Barracks cycle path. To the east the wood is bounded by industrial land and an area of establishing woodland. Old Cousland Road is to the south. There is a retained access through the middle of the sub compartments wood linking the 2 industrial sites east and west. Underground telephone services are found to the north of the sub compartment						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
(Previously southern block of 26a, renamed in 2025)						
27a	0.7	Scots pine	1950	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Previously known as 'Eliburn South Wood' the sub compartment is a roughly triangular shaped wood of even aged Scots pine with patches of spruce, sycamore, ash, grey alder and beech. Understory dominated by ash and sycamore regen but localised due to closed canopy. Deadwood from past restructuring works in 2003 and 2014 and tree safety works is present. Ground flora is limited to the woodland edge or areas where pockets in the canopy have opened due to wind blow. There is a residential development along the northern boundary and a shallow burn/ditch running west-east and draining into the Lochshot Burn to the east. A post and wire fence is found along the northern boundary due to increases in fly tipping from the neighbouring residential roads.						
27b	0.5	Scots pine	1950	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Narrow strip of semi-mature broadleaves and conifers to the west of the Lochshot burn. Sycamore, beech and Scots pine dominate with some veteran oak on the edge of the wood. The closed canopy limited the light levels available for the lower canopy and ground flora leading to large areas of bare ground throughout with most ground flora seen on the edge which nettle and bramble dominate. Deadwood from past restructuring works in 2003 and 2014 and tree safety works. Residential developments are found to the north and south with an access road to Housepark Place to the east. The sub compartment is bordered by a post and wire fence on the southeast boundary due to continued fly tipping from the neighbouring residential roads. The northwest boundary is defined by a deep drainage ditch and includes a reminiscence of a previous drystone dyke.						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
Previously western block of 28a, renamed in 2025)						
28a	0.9	Scots pine	1950	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin
Previously known as 'Livingston Place Wood' this is a stand of mature woodland dominated by Scots pine and non-native conifer with mature sycamore, horse chestnut and beech. An understorey of beech with rowan, elder and sycamore has established but in general the shrub, field and ground cover is poor. Deadwood is abundant from previous thinning in 2002 and 2014, tree safety works and storm damage. Residential housing is found along the northern and southwestern boundaries, with a small access road along the eastern boundary and a streetlight path through the centre of the compartment giving access to the public. A post and wire fence was added to the western boundary due to continued fly tipping from the neighbouring residential roads. This has been seen to be successful since its completion (as of 2025). Services include underground electrical wires.						
29a	0.6	Sycamore	1900	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mineshafts/sink holes etc, Services and Wayleaves	
Previously known as 'Burnfield Wood' this is a stand of mature beech with sycamore, poplar, ash and whitebeam situated on a grassy knoll which rises steeply above the surrounding residential areas. The understorey includes Scots pine, occasional Sitka spruce, ash, beech, sycamore and hawthorn. Ground flora is dominated by grasses with nettles and some non native species such as Sorbaria and cotoneaster which have spread from the roadside to the north. Deadwood is mainly large felled beech from tree safety works and large diameter standing dead wood after						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
storm damage. The wood sits between Millfield and Burnfield residential areas to the south of Kirkton North road. A section of the Shale Trail runs along the southern boundary, which links the compartment with 34a. Services include underground sewage pipes.						
30a	0.9	Scots pine	1975	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site, Services & Wayleaves	
Previously known as 'Kirkton North Wood' this compartment comprises of dense semi-mature mixed broadleaves with Scots pine, spruce and larch, cherry, sycamore, elder, hawthorn and mature birch. There is also a veteran lime just south of the street lit path that bisects the wood. Originally planted as a buffer between business and housing developments by the LDC, the area has now become extremely isolated with little access after residential developments to the east were completed. The compartment was lightly thinned in 2002 with additional larch removed in 2012 and some thinning by January storm of 2012, most of which was felled to waste so dead wood is abundant throughout. Ground flora is dominated by bramble, with areas of dense common periwinkle and ivy. Cousland Road forms the northern boundary with an electrical distribution station next to the northwest corner. Kirkton north road is down a steep slope to the south. Services include multiple underground electric and telephone lines.						
31a	0.4	Beech	1975	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site, Services & Wayleaves	
Previously known as 'Howden West Clump' lying to the east of Alderstone Road and south of Kirkton North Road, this is a stand of mature and over mature beech and non-native conifer. There is some underplanting with Scots pine						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
with wild cherry (gean), Norway maple, field maple sycamore, rowan, ash, beech and hazel, particularly down the east side, which has become dense and closed canopy in recent years (2025). The understorey is scarce and lacks diversity with deadwood made up of previous felling from tree safety operations in 2014 and storm damage to the mature oaks. The woodland is bordered by a street lit path to the west and an office space complex on Quarrywood Cresent to the south. A underpass under Kirkton North Road links the wood to 32a. There is an underground gas line along the north east boundary.						
32a	0.9	Beech	1900	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features on or adjacent to site, Services & Wayleaves	
Narrow strip of semi-mature broadleaves and conifers which were planted to screen the industrial estate on Fairbairn Road from Cousland Rd to the north. This is a mixed woodland with Scots pine, beech, horse chestnut, Sitka spruce, birch, field maple, ash, hybrid larch, grand fir, cherry, crab apple, willow and norway spruce. There is very little regen or understory and is limited to ash and holly regen and established laurel bushes. Ground flora consists of soft grasses and mosses where canopy allows. Thining works in 2002 and 2014 and subsequent tree safety works and storm damage as lead to an increase in standing and fallen dead wood. There is a drystone dyke and large drainage ditch along the south of the compartment, marking the boundary. Underground gas lines are found to the east of the compartment from Cousland Road and along the southern boundary with the industrial estate.						
32b	0.8	Beech	1900	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site, Housing/infrastructure, structure & water features	

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
					on or adjacent to site, Services & Wayleaves	
Previously known as 'Beeches Strip South' this was originally an extension of Howdens West Clump to the south but is now split by Kirkton North road. This is a stand of mature and over mature beech and pedunculate oak, with occasional sycamore, alder and ash. Understorey includes areas of abundant beech regeneration and frequent ash and holly regeneration, with occasional Norway spruce, pedunculate oak, elder, hawthorn, rowan, sycamore, Norway maple. Ground flora lacks diversity with a grass sward dominating. Dead wood is limited but there is a significant pollarded beech away from the footpath which offers a rare standing deadwood habitat. There are two street lit tarmac paths which cut across the wood from the neighbouring industrial estate to the east to the street lit path which runs along the eastern boundary which then links into the wider Livingston path network. Services include underground telephone and gas lines near the north east corner.						
33a	1.36	Scots pine	1975	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within site	
Previously known as 'Toll Strip' this is a narrow belt of semi-mature mixed woodland that includes Scots pine, spruce, oak, sycamore, birch, Douglas fir, rowan, alder and field maple. Understorey includes occasional hawthorn which also makes a broken hedge line along the western boundary and elder. Likewise, ground flora is also sparse due to the dense canopy and is limited to course vegetation and nettle. Deadwood is limited but is made up of the arisings from thinning carried out in 2002 and 2014 and subsequent storm damage. The strip provides screening from the water treatment works to the east. A post and wire fence was installed along the western boundary in 2024 and a strip of open ground along the western edge was planted with Scots pine, goat willow, silver birch, hazel, hawthorn, holly, oak, rowan, alder and elder in 2023/2024 with volunteers. Whilst the new planting becomes established, flora species associated with areas of open ground such as grasses, thistle, clover and knapweed are dominant.						

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland
Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland
Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site
Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up
Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf
A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy
The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell
Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment
Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer
A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry
A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species
Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer
Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell
The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention
Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention
Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland
Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)
A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species
Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration
Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance
The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking
Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer
Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand
Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment
Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning
The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes
Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding
The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

Windblow/Windthrow
Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.

Registered Office:
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